

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 768. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 1883.

PRICE TWOPENCE

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. FENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XIII. "WASN'T IT HORRID?"

FROM the moment that young Mrs. Ray had made up her mind to break up the establishment at Moor Royal, preparations for a speedy exodus went on apace.

Effie was not one to suffer the grass to grow under her feet when she had a goal to gain, an object to carry out.

Her object now was to divest herself of all responsibility concerning her husband's mother and sister, and she knew she could not do this while they were under her roof-tree. The easiest and most courteous way of getting rid of them, was to get rid of the home in which they were all dwelling together. By making herself a "wanderer, a waif and stray," as she pathetically termed herself, she did away with there being anything invidious in leaving them to become the same.

Accordingly, servants were dismissed, horses were sold, the furniture was covered, and a general air of going away diffused over the whole place, before old Mrs. Ray understood what it was all about. Then, when she questioned about it, and listened comprehendingly, Jenifer told her plainly what she had often sought to suggest before.

"It means that you and I must make a new home for ourselves, where we must try and be happy," the girl said hopefully; and then she went on to tell her mother what she proposed doing in order that she might help to support the new home.

"I shall never consent to it, Jenny. You, Miss Ray, of Moor Royal, to think of becoming a concert-singer—a public singer! I shall never consent to it," old Mrs. Ray kept on repeating for at least five minutes after Jenifer had mooted the plan to her.

Then she changed her ground a little on finding that Jenifer would not argue with her on the propriety of becoming a public singer, but was steadily resolved to be one if she could.

"And if you are obstinately set on having your own wilful way, my child," the poor widow-lady went on with overdone resignation, "why go to the needless expense of having more lessons? I'm sure you sing beautifully, Jenny. Your poor father always used to say that you strongly reminded him of Louisa Pyne in her best days. Further lessons for you in singing I shall regard as quite superfluous."

Jenifer knew that it would be mere waste of time to try and make her mother understand that she still had everything connected with her art to learn; so she speciously put the necessity for going to Madame Voglio on other grounds.

"You see, I shall want introductions, and I can only get them through professional mediums. Mother dear, you must let me have my own way in this."

"I shall speak to Mr. Boldero about it. Badly as I feel he has behaved, I shall certainly speak to Mr. Boldero about it. Your brothers I can no longer rely upon nor consult."

"I have told Mr. Boldero what I'm going to do."

"And he is allowing your father's daughter to do it!" old Mrs. Ray said with bitter sarcasm. "Ah well, I may as well include him with your brothers in the class upon whom I can no longer rely."

"Everything is so changed for us at Moor Royal that the complete change to a London life will be a happy one, I'm sure, for us," Jenifer said bravely. "Let us try and picture the little home we'll have by-and-by, when I am making money, and we can afford to live where we like."

"That we shall never be able to do, my child; but," with a sudden recollection of all she owed to this daughter's high-hearted endeavours to make the best of things, "but we will try and be happy wherever we are, Jenny. I shall have you, and, having you, I am rich and blest."

"We must go into lodgings while I'm on probation. I think I shall rather like going about and looking for them. Effie knows more about London than we do; she may be able to suggest some place that would be near Madame Voglio, respectable, and cheap at the same time."

Accordingly Effie was consulted, but though she was put into a thoroughly amiable mood by the announcement of Jenifer's intention of taking her mother and herself away from Moor Royal with as little delay as possible, she could not give any very sound advice on the subject of lodgings in the vicinity of St. John's Wood.

"There must be thousands of apartments to let about there, but you see I don't know that side of the park at all, with the exception of Westbourne Grove; but my idea is that all the people about there either let lodgings or live in them. You'll have no difficulty in getting them, I'm sure. When do you go up, Jenny? Hugh and I think of going up this day week."

"Perhaps we had all better travel up together," old Mrs. Ray said, before her daughter could interpose.

"Hugh and I go straight to the Jervises, and the next day Flora and I go down to Brighton to take a suite of rooms in an hotel. The doctors have ordered Mr. Jervise to Brighton, and Flora wants me to be with her. So you see we should only just travel up together, and part at the station," Effie said carelessly; and then she added: "Flora has been taking no end of trouble with Madame Voglio about you, Jenifer; she went and nearly made herself ill by lunching with her; but Flora never minds what she does when she wants to have anything done. She has made Madame Voglio promise to get you engagements, and Madame Voglio will keep her promise to Flora, because Flora always takes ten guineas' worth of tickets for any concert Voglio is interested in."

"It all seems horribly low and sordid," Jenifer could not refrain from saying.

"Oh, I don't know; society in every grade is carried on by a system of give and take. We can't help it, and we can't

mend it; the only thing is to get all the benefit from it we can. I do, and so does Flora. We must all pay our way in some form or other; we must all contribute to the amusement of society if we want society to have anything to do with us—in fact, to amuse us in return."

Effie was standing before her dressing-table glass decorating herself prettily with lace and sparkling bracelets and rings as she spoke. She was putting on her war-paint for a ball that was to come off this night at one of the big adjacent "places," and as she wanted to go out of the neighbourhood with good effect, she was expending a good deal of care and thought on the arrangement of her decorations.

Jenifer was not going to this ball, which was given by people who were really old and loyal friends of the Rays. Jenifer's crape and grief were both too fresh for anyone to think of proposing any form of festivity to her. But it was clearly understood that young Mrs. Ray had discarded crape altogether, and, as a bride, wished to have nothing further to do with family grief for the present.

"I only trust society expects as little from me as I do from it," Jenifer said with unruffled good temper. "After all, the good things are more equally distributed than people think sometimes in temporary fits of dissatisfaction; for instance, you get all you want from society by paying your way, and I am quite content to get nothing, as I give nothing."

"You do think I make a fair return then, Jenifer?" Effie asked joyously, basking as it were in the refulgent rays of her own brilliant self-appreciation.

"Yes, I do," Jenifer said, regarding her sister-in-law critically; "it can give you no such graceful pleasure in return as you give it. Effie, be equally gracious at home to us; get Hubert to say a word or two of brotherly kindness to Jack before we all leave him to his isolation."

Jenifer's voice broke as she said it. It was very much to her now that the hour had nearly come when almost all the old ties were to be severed, that there should be brotherly love between Hubert and Jack.

"Hugh may say as many kind words to Jack as he has the eloquence to utter," Effie laughed, as she twisted a flashing bracelet higher up on her slender arm. "I saw that horrid woman—by the way, I forgot to tell you—this morning, as I was riding home by the back lane; she was

just opening the wicket to go into the fruit-gardens, and I called out to her that neither Mr. Ray nor I allowed trespassing. I rode straight up to her as I said it, and she had to let go the gate and stand back, or the horse would have been over her. Wasn't it horrid?"

"Of you?—yes."

"Now, Jenifer, don't pretend to think that I ought to treat her as I treat you, for instance. Will you get my cloak—the ruby-plush one, to-night, please? Funny, it seems, that we are all going away from Moor Royal, doesn't it? Thanks. I wonder if Hugh is ready; he has not learnt yet that he's never to keep me waiting. Good-night, dear. I wish you were coming; I hope you won't be dull."

So young Mrs. Ray pursued her path to the ball, and Jenifer went back to her packing, and to the perfecting of her plans for the future.

"From the very first I must let Effie see that I can do without her," Miss Ray said to herself, as she finished writing a letter to a lady who still kept the establishment for young ladies in Kensington, at which Jenifer had sojourned for two years of her life. Miss Ray had not learnt anything particularly good, useful, or ornamental there, but she knew the lady-superintendent, Miss Barton, to be a good, clear, London-minded woman. Therefore, to Miss Barton Jenifer appealed for advice as to the locality in which she ought to seek for lodgings.

"They must be cheap, respectable, and not out of walking distance of Godolphin Place, St. John's Wood," she wrote, and hopeful fancy told her that some such might perhaps be found in one of the terraces in Regent's Park.

"Shall we take any of the furniture away with us, Jenny?" her mother asked, when an encouraging letter from Miss Barton opened the prospect before them of getting lodgings that would be all their hearts desired in Delamere Crescent, Paddington.

"I cannot conscientiously say that Delamere Crescent is even on the borders of a fashionable precinct," Miss Barton wrote, "but it is a quiet, respectable, convenient, and cheap locality, and by walking over a little bridge which crosses the canal, you may reach St. John's Wood comfortably in half an hour. I am sorry to hear of the reverses which have made the step you have taken necessary. Still, my sympathies are so entirely with the women who strive

to make an honourable independence for themselves, that I cannot pity you for having been compelled to take it. Mine is such a peculiar connection that I scarcely dare to hold out any prospect of being able to get you any pupils. The parents will have masters and mistresses with established names and fames. Doubtless you will soon make a name and fame for yourself, and then, dearest child, as you were ever a favourite pupil of mine, I shall be delighted to help you to the full extent of my poor power."

"How kind!" old Mrs. Ray said gratefully, when Jenifer read this passage. And, as Jenifer wished her mother to take a genial view of the world and worldlings at the time, she refrained from offering her own opinion as to the value of Miss Barton's proffered aid in the future.

"Yes, very kind to be definite and tell us of this Delamere Crescent," Jenifer said briskly; and then old Mrs. Ray asked her daughter again if the latter "thought it would be well to take away any of the furniture."

"I wouldn't take a chair," Jenifer said firmly. "Effie won't like it if you do, and already there is so much disunion in the family that it seems a pity for us to do the least thing that may annoy."

"Perhaps you are right about taking things away from Moor Royal, Jenny; but, before I go, I'll have it distinctly understood by Hubert that I can take what I please, when I please."

To this Jenifer had no answer to make. She could only hope that the day would never come, when an undignified struggle for a few goods and chattels should take place between the mother and her son.

The hour for them all to leave Moor Royal was very near at hand now. And still old Mrs. Ray had held out, and refused to see Jack, her youngest born. It was not to be endured any longer by Jenifer at least.

The night before the dawn which was to witness their departure had arrived. Effie had stood her ground stoutly against her own inclination, which would have taken her to London several days before. But so resolved was she to see her mother-in-law off the premises before she herself left, that she stayed on in discomfort, and made her husband feel that she was something very like a martyr.

This last night seemed a very long and dreary one. Nearly all the servants were gone; nearly all the rooms were dismantled

and locked up. All the domestic arrangements were a little out of order, and Effie was cross.

After all, this having to shut up her own house, and go back as a visitor to her sister, was rather humiliating, now that it had come to the point. When she had proposed doing so first she viewed the change from the height of her own wilful independence. Rather than put up with a wearisome mother-in-law and an obnoxious young brother-in-law and his wife, she "would go back to Flora," she had said threateningly. And her husband had taken her at her word.

"Jenifer," she said reluctantly as they went back to a disarranged drawing-room, after having partaken of an ill-ordered dinner, "I forgot to tell you that Captain Edgecumb worried me nearly to distraction the other night at the Pembertons' ball with questions about you, and your intentions, and plans, and prospects. I told him all I could remember, and said if he wanted to know more he could find out from you yourself, as he happens to be going up to town with us to-morrow. If you play your cards well, Jenifer, you may bring him to the point before we reach Paddington. I'm sure of it, and I know him well."

"You've just said the very thing to make me cool to him," Jenifer cried; "he would have been like any other fellow-traveller to me if you hadn't said that; as it is I shall feel that you look on him as a mouse, and on me as a cat."

"To be honest, I don't care a bit about whether you catch him or not now," Effie said indifferently. "When I thought that Mr. Boldero and you were going to unite your forces, I did try to put Edgecumb forward as a rival to the family lawyer. But now the Boldero danger's overpast; so, believe me, I was quite disinterested in telling you of the flattering interest Captain Edgecumb manifested in you the other night."

Young Mrs. Ray said this in her most supercilious tones, and her tones could be most offensively supercilious when she pleased.

"May Heaven save me from the necessity of ever living under the same roof with Effie again," Jenifer prayed silently but fervently. Then she got herself out of the room, and made her way rapidly to the home-farmhouse to say good-bye to Jack.

She had seen her brother several times since his marriage, but she had not been

able to overcome her repugnance to his wife sufficiently to induce her to go to his house. But now the break-up had come. The parting between them might be final, for Jenifer felt that it was more than improbable that she would ever come to the old home again. She forgot his wife, and only remembered that he was her brother.

Her knock at the door was answered by Elsie, who, anxious as she was to play a paying part on either side, was a little awkward and "mazed," as she herself expressed it.

"Miss Jenifer! Lor! now, won't the missus be glad to see 'e; not that she could look—— But then, 'luss best between brothers and sisters to be friendly like, I say. Come in, do 'ee."

ALONG THE SILVER STREAK.

PART VI.

"Of course I knew you, Frank," said Hilda, as we travelled swiftly along the road towards Bayeux, having left C  risy and the vengeful Count de St. Pol far behind. "I knew you at once," she continued; "but, as you thought proper to hide yourself behind an alias, it was not for me to break down the barrier you had raised between us."

That was all very well, I urged, but who had raised the barrier in the first instance—the most formidable barrier possible—in the person of Mr. Chancellor, the accepted suitor? Not that I blamed her indeed. I knew the pressure under which she had acted. But now, surely, all barriers could be removed, there were no difficulties in the way that could not be overcome. But Hilda looked grave. How could she break her faith with a man who was both honourable and generous, who had saved her father from ruin, and her brother, perhaps, even from disgrace. No, she had been betrayed into the expression of her long suppressed feelings at the sight of me just now. But still, emotion must give way to stern realities. She must leave Mr. Chancellor to thank me fully for rescuing her from a situation of some embarrassment. And then she went on to explain how the situation came about.

Hilda had been anxious to see this old abbey church of C  risy; and then there had been a misconception as to the distance. Some country people who had been asked had given the distance as six kilometres, she understood, or not quite four miles,

while in reality six leagues were intended, or at least fifteen miles. The country people cling to their leagues as measures of distance, as they do to their sous in monetary matters, just as if the Revolution had never happened. But the count must have known that Hilda was under a delusion when she informed her father that she would be back in an hour or two. And then there had been delay after delay, wilfully contrived, Hilda believed, by the count, who seemed to enjoy her perplexity and discomfiture. In the end, Hilda had declared her intention of making her way on foot to Bayeux, and had started with that intention, the count urging her with unpleasant persistence to remain, when I appeared upon the scene:

All's well that ends well, and the incident might have been soon forgotten, but for the unfortunate blow which I had given the count, and which, if he deserved it ever so much, he could hardly be expected to forgive. He would hardly remain beaten and content; but anyhow, it rested with him to take the next step; and why should we mar the sweetness of the hour by any thought of him? Contango seemed to feel that no great speed was required of him for the moment; he fell into a walk which became more and more leisurely as he looked about for something to startle him—a cow cropping the hedge, or the distant whinny of some brother or sister quadruped.

We had a hundred things to talk about, Hilda and I—all the past times that we had spent together, culminating in that sorrowful parting before Miss Chudleigh's house at Weymouth. Was it possible, Hilda asked, to have your heart broken more than once?

But it was useless, she said, to dwell any more on what had passed away. Mr. Chancellor had behaved splendidly. He was a man of action, full of energy and resource, and he had taken up the Chudleigh family, and brought them out of the pit into which they were falling. He too was an old friend; his father had been a poor curate in a parish near Combe Chudleigh. But John Chancellor had left home when a boy, to seek his fortune among the manufacturing people of Lancashire, and had found it. He had fought his own way to the front, and might be trusted to maintain himself there; but he had remembered the Chudleighs, who had been kind to his father; and he had sought out Hilda, although he might well have looked for a more brilliant match.

"Can I desert such a man?" asked Hilda.

For some distance we had travelled along a narrow country road bordering the forest, very quiet and almost gloomy in its shaded stillness; and then we struck into a broad well-frequented highway, which turned out to be the high road between Bayeux and St. Lô. This road followed pretty closely the course of the little river Drôme through a fertile pleasant valley in the midst of a gently-undulating country, and before long the spires of Bayeux appeared in the distance outlined against the evening sky. There is a strange, yet home-like appearance about these spires of Bayeux, home-like in the twin spires that might belong to some English minster, and strange in the curious dome that crowns the whole—if dome it can be called, which is neither tower, nor spire, nor dome, but a curious mixture of all three; as if some old Crusader had brought home a cupola from an Eastern mosque and stuck it on the top of the grim solid old cathedral.

Presently we pass the little octroi hut, where a sleepy old fellow looks out, but does not take the trouble to ask if we have anything to declare, and so into the precincts of quiet old Bayeux, passing the railway-station, where a little knot of omnibuses are waiting for the train from Paris, and then across a rich lush valley, where the quiet river Aure winds among willows and elms, and is almost lost in the thick grass and luxuriant foliage. And here on the broad highway the young people of the town are at drill—boys and young men who have not yet reached the age for candidates for the conscription. The boys are restless and fidgety, and inclined to level their chassepots at every passing object; but the youths march smartly enough and look thoroughly in earnest. A new departure this for France, and likely to develop the love of soldiering, which in most parts of the country had for long almost ceased to exist.

Across the road, as you enter Bayeux, still hang the old-fashioned street lamps suspended by a cord as in the days of the Revolution, when it was the fashion to use them for hanging any unhappy aristocrat who might have incurred popular displeasure. Then there is the washing-place, where the old women are still at work beating their clothes and rubbing them in the running stream, chattering all the while and seeming to enjoy their evening toil.

One old lady amuses Hilda especially, as she stands in her tub half-way in the stream, as if on an island, while she works vigorously away at her lessive. And then a glimpse at the pond, where horses and cattle may drink—a solemn shady nook, overhung with trees, with fragments of ancient stonework to be seen here and there. After this, into the High Street, for such it must surely be, although it bears the unfamiliar inscription, Rue St. Martin. This is quite an English High Street, like that of Guildford, for example, steep and up-and-down, with smart little shops all lighted up, where the shopkeepers stand at their doors discussing the affairs of the day and staring at the new arrivals with curious eyes. And then we drive into the courtyard of the Hôtel de Luxembourg, where a pleasant, comely hostess comes out to welcome us. Oh yes, our friends have arrived, and are about to sit down to dinner; but there is no hurry; dinner can be served as much later as we wish.

"Which of our friends have arrived?" is now the question asked a little anxiously. But the suspense is soon over as we appear at the table d'hôte—a prolonged table d'hôte that is kept up till almost any hour at night. There are the old squire and Madame la Directrice, who have become excellent friends, it seems, under the stress of circumstances. No one else is there, not even Tom, about whom we are getting a little anxious. And we slide into our places without remark from the others, except that Stéphanie sweetly enquires "if mademoiselle has enjoyed her abbey?"

But immediately dinner was over Hilda disappeared for the night. She was quite too tired, she said, to sit up any longer. Justine had everything ready for her mistress, and made great eyes of curiosity, but did not venture to ask any questions. And then the little diligence came in from Port en Bessin—a nondescript vehicle in which only the coupé in front and a bench at the top, still called la banquette, remain as survivals of the ancient, roomy, lumbering diligence. The diligence brought news of the Sea Mew, which was lying at anchor outside the harbour, and Wyvern had sent word that the whole party would sleep on board that night and come to Bayeux next day.

In the middle of the night there was a great bustle in the hotel. Guests had arrived. Bells rang violently, waiters and chambermaids ran to and fro. Presently there was a knock at my door, and

Tom Courtney came in like a whirlwind, eager to tell his adventures. Redmond had driven him to his cottage in the country, not far from Caen. Tom described the place with enthusiasm. Surely Redmond might have been very happy there, with his orchard and his cider-press, with the pretty little paysanne who lived in the cottage close by. He might have married the pretty paysanne, and have set on foot a new Norman family to grow and flourish when the one in old England should have died out. Perhaps Redmond had had some such ideas in his head before we met him. And then at the sight of people from the world he had left, the current of his ideas was at once changed. If his creditors could be appeased, if his position could be regained, why should he hide himself any longer under a peasant's blue blouse? And as for the pretty paysanne, it was adieu for evermore, my love! Or rather he did not trouble himself to say adieu at all. Redmond would have left all things to take their chance, his pony, his poultry, and all his little pigs; but Tom persuaded him to sell the whole for a lump sum—the lump not being of any great size—to the stout, red-faced Norman who kept the auberge of the village. Redmond would not stop to give one shake of the hand, or say one word of adieu, to people who, on his own showing, had been very kind and hospitable. He was a man thoroughly reckless and selfish, Tom said, who would sacrifice everybody and everything to the whim of the moment. Tom felt, he declared, like the fisherman in the Arabian Nights who had let the genius out of the bottle.

Then Tom had to listen to my story, and like the captain of the Thunder Bomb, he very much approved of what I had done, especially the horsewhip business, but he agreed that it was certain we should hear more of the matter in the future. And we must take care that Hilda's name was not brought into the affair. Tom shook his head when he heard of Contango's performance. So much work on a heavy road might put out his chance for the trotting-race. Contango must rest all the following day, and if people wanted to drive anywhere they must go by diligence.

Next morning the sun was shining brightly through the green rush-matting of the sun-blinds, and pushing them aside, a pleasant scene presented itself below, where in the garden among flowers and shrubs a

table was laid with snow-white cloth and serviettes, where Hilda and her father with Madame la Directrice were sipping their early morning *café au lait*. Above them rose the grey roofs of old Bayeux, roofs which owe their pleasant tone and their air of antiquity to the use of a slaty kind of limestone, or stony kind of slate, geologists must decide which; a slaty product, at all events, which is found in the neighbourhood, but which is unhappily being replaced by the staring blue slate of commerce. And above the roofs rose the still more hoary towers of the cathedral, and the kiosk-like dome.

With all these roofs and towers, the view is not crowded. There is plenty of room in old Bayeux; there are big gaps among the roofs filled up with clumps of foliage; open places with formally clipped avenues; old mansions with their grassy courts and big gardens, once the hotels of the royal officials no doubt, where now the notary and the huissier mount their brazen emblems of the majesty of the law. Altogether there is an air about the place as if giants had lived there once and pigmies had taken their place. Here are gardens, too, full of roses still, with fat strawberry-beds, and pears ripening on the walls, all fresh and glittering with dew drops, while Hilda, fresh as a rose as to her cheeks, and dewy as to her lips, sits there and drinks her *café au lait*, all unconscious of being observed. Madame la Directrice is a little yellow in the morning light, and has an air of fatigue, as if she would say with the sluggard, "You have woke me too soon, let me slumber again."

Tom has joined the party by this time, has disposed of his bowl of coffee, and has crumpled up a roll as if it were a comfit. And then he vouchsafes a remark in an injured tone:

"I suppose we must go and see the tapestry?"

Hilda replies with decision: "Of course we must go and see the tapestry."

Madame la Directrice, with a languid air, exclaims:

"Ah, that tapestry, it is something very nice. I think I must get some for my little salon."

Tom was inclined to laugh, and Madame la Directrice saw in a moment that she had made some little mistake, and laughed herself good-humouredly:

"Have I committed a *bêtise*? Never mind, since my husband is not here to scold me."

When I came down Hilda and the rest were just starting for the *Bibliothèque* to see the tapestry. It reminded one of going to morning service, there was just that gentle stream of people in one direction. Most of the people were English. There were a couple of fresh-looking English youths, who were going about the country on bicycles; a family of tall girls, who had the air of being in possession of exclusive information on every possible subject; and a married couple, who quarrelled a little in a subdued manner. And besides these, our compatriots, there were a pair of French provincials, who may have the complacent feeling that they were about to assist at the humiliation of perfidious Albion.

Hilda confesses to something like a feeling of awe, as we enter the room where the tapestry is shown. An old lady sitting in the entrance-hall, tranquilly knitting and keeping an eye upon the visitors, might be a guardian of the dead, she ushers us in with such a grave, subdued air. But here it is, the handiwork of those noble dames of old—the mothers, wives, and daughters of those mighty men who hammered out the iron framework of England's greatness. The tapestry is stretched upon a screen and covered with glass, and is still wonderfully fresh and vivid—less faded, indeed, than many of the samplers our great-grandmothers have left behind them—and worked in a stitch very much like the modern crewel-work upon hand-made linen that suggests the work of Indian looms. But what we are not quite prepared for is the admirable spirit and life of the work, of which the photographic reproductions give no idea. These ancient dames must have worked with the needle till they acquired a kind of artist's touch. The forms are rude, and often grotesque, indeed; but they live and move, and, having seen them, you feel that you know the men and their times ever so much better than you did before. The story is told, too, with much simplicity and directness, and you feel at once that the nobly-born women who worked on this elaborate epic with the needle must have known the heroes of it in their lives. Harold is the chief hero, and Harold is treated with a sympathy and respect that suggest something like affection for the gallant, kingly man. And then we see why this tapestry is appropriately placed at Bayeux, rather than at Westminster, or York, or Winchester. For the central incident of the plot is not either shipwreck or battle, but the terrible

oath that Harold took in the cathedral here at Bayeux upon the relics of the saints and in face of the high altar; the oath which he swore to William, and which he broke for the sake of England's crown. Next to Harold, Odo is the favourite with the women of those days—Odo, the warrior-bishop, who spent the revenues of this fat diocese in arms, and horses, and soldiers' trappings.

The old lady, who sits tranquilly in the doorway, kindly leaves people alone to study the tapestry at their leisure; only interfering to turn the visitor round the corner at the right moment to investigate the inner side of the screen; and it is pleasant to find that the tapestry is freely accessible to strangers all day long and every day in the week.

At ten o'clock precisely a footstep sounds upon the staircase that leads to the library above, and a grave pleasant-looking librarian mounts and opens the big door. The library is a pleasant quiet room lined with books, and there the grave librarian sits over a big volume, a learned-looking skull-cap on his head. No doubt he is diving deeply into the history of old Bayeux, and some day, perhaps, we shall see an exhaustive and learned work from his pen, beginning with the deposition of the Bajocien oolite, and ending with the introduction of gas-lamps and the new pavement.

Meantime, he shows with pride a presentation copy from "Sout Kensington" of a work on the Bayeux Tapestry, and sundry seals and charters which have been presented by English people. Perhaps there is not very much to interrupt his studies except the inquisitiveness of English people like ourselves, whose prattle he listens to and answers with urbanity and patience.

There is, indeed, not much doing. Sometimes an elderly gentleman comes in to read the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Sometimes a learned duc of the old régime looks in with a little paper of notes and queries to be resolved in some old MS. or early edition; it is chiefly with the old aristocracy of France that any taste remains for archaeology.

We have been talking of Alan Chartier, the poet of the fifteenth century who was born here at Bayeux in a house that is still in existence, and Hilda wants to see an early edition of his works, which the grave librarian courteously looks out for us.

"Faicts et dictz de Maistre Alain Char-

trier—à Paris par Philippe le Noir en la rue Sainct Jacques à l'enseigne de la rose blanche couronnée." Here we have the lament of a noble dame, whose lover was slain at the battle of Agincourt, and much amorous poetry of a grave, and dignified, and highly proper character. But one little distich pleases me, which I show to Hilda:

Aymer je vous vueil
Par joye ou par dueil,

which I freely translate for her benefit, lest she should be puzzled by the old French, "Love you I will, for good or ill."

At this moment Tom Courtney comes along to whip us up for the omnibus to Port en Bessin. Madame la Directrice is uneasy at being so long away from her director, and we are to start at once, trusting to getting breakfast at Port. For everybody calls the place Port—it is the port of the district, and the people of the Bessin still hang together, a little clanishly.

We are to meet at the bureau in the Place aux Pommés—for there is a place for everything in roomy Bayeux; we should not be surprised to find a separate place for shrimps and watercresses. And so we find ourselves at a little glass office in the middle of a yard, where omnibuses and diligence are stored, with much poultry, and an occasional hearse. On the walls outside many coloured bills are to be seen, announcing excursions, to the British Isles among other places, and inviting us to assist at the solemnity of the "Exposition industrielle de la pêche."

The omnibus is pretty well packed with our party, and a newly-married couple, the bride looking rather frightened and not particularly happy. Just in front of us starts another omnibus, smaller and even rougher-looking than ours, for Asnelles, the roof loaded with flowers, and one fat, rosy, happy-looking curé inside. We leave Bayeux by the top of the town, where there is an old convent turned into a gendarmerie, and a vast market-place lined with a double row of trees, and with ancient-looking stone benches for the butter and egg women to stand their wares upon, where Henry Plantagenet may have come to chaffer with the pretty market-girls. All tells of ancient times, and of a life which has known no violent disruption since those days of old. And the sleepy old chimes ring us out of the town, as if it were as much as they can do to get through their bar of feeble harmony.

And then we travel along a straight road

lined with poplars, and looking back there is always the cathedral to be seen at the end of the avenue; for there its towers stand out without appearing to become more distant for mile after mile—at least for kilomètre after kilomètre. A fertile country lies around, well-wooded, and with rich pastures, the cows lying half concealed in the rich herbage. The farmers' wives are driving out in their little donkey-carts for the mid-day milking, their noble brass milk-cans glittering and clanking; or sometimes with a hotte—a rough wooden framework—on the donkey's back, that holds eight of these grand milking-pails—four on a side, and the good dame in the middle, sturdily astride the donkey's neck. The donkeys are fine and reasonable-looking beasts, with hearts to be touched by objugation and reproof, and consequently, knowing little of the stick, fat, comfortable-looking animals, of no great size, but decidedly clever goers.

Here we pass a château, or the site of one rather, with nothing left of its original grandeur but stables, which are good enough for the farmer to live in, and some grand-looking barns and the seigneurial pigeon-towers now converted into cart-sheds. As we approach the coast the hills rise to an edge—hills not so rich-looking or so thickly wooded as the country we have just passed through, but covered with good crops of grain. This is the edge of the Bessin, the great milk basin of Normandy. What pastures there are within it, what cattle, and what prosperity! Hundreds of little homesteads lie scattered about, filled with cosy, comfortable people, who have cause to rejoice that the seigneurial barns lie empty, and that the seigneurial pigeons no longer plunder the furrows for miles around. Then through a gap in the range of hills we catch sight of the little port beneath us, and the sea spread tranquilly far and near. Our coachman has kept back a gallop for the avenue, and we dash wildly into the little town, where there is some gentle stir in the way of ship-building, and where a few fishing-boats are lying high and dry in the inner harbour.

In the port itself great works are going on, digging and excavating, with ballast-waggons and a ballast-engine running noisily about. Till recently there was a little établissement here under the cliff, for the bathers who came during the season, but that has been swept away by the harbour-works. The place is a brisk

and pleasant one, with rocky cliffs rising on either hand, and layers of limestone-rocks forming the sea-floor, while the harbour-piers make a breezy, quiet promenade.

The Sea Mew is lying a good way out at sea, for the tide runs low, and the bottom is rocky; but she is coming in as soon as the tide makes. And already the water is stirring, and the sturdy masts of the fisher-boats begin to topple to and fro. So we take our second breakfast comfortably outside the inn, in full view of all that is going on, and with the sea shining before us. The tide rises, the fishing population is astir; the fisher-wives, loaded with nets and baskets, pitch their burdens on to the boats. Sails are hauled up, and everybody shouts and pulls, often leaving off pulling to shout more freely. Meantime one or two boats have come in with the tide. The bell over the neat little fish-market rings lustily. Baskets of fish are landed. The bell rings again, and they are all sold. When more boats come in, the market begins again; the bell ringing to announce its opening. The dealers, mostly women, flock together; and again the bell jingles, and the market is closed. And so on all day long, and well into the night.

By this time a fishing-boat is ready to start from the inner basin. "La porte, ouvrez!" cries the fisherman's wife, who is managing matters on shore. And then everybody puts his or her back to the lever of the dock-gate—douaniers, women, idlers. The gate opens, and the boat passes through, her big mainsail shaking in the wind. Away they go, the crew bustling about, and the master bawling lustily. There are four men on board, and a mousse, a little sailor-boy, the cleverest of the party, who speaks up as if he were the head of them all. As the boat scuds through the harbour, the master's wife runs after her along the pier, and pelts the receding boat with anything she can pick up. It is all for luck, no doubt, like our old shoes in England, and the master shouts back a cheery adieu.

Well, our breakfast is finished just as the steam-pipe of the Sea Mew gives us hoarse warning of her approach. Such a scene has hardly ever been seen before in the little port, and the whole population clusters on the pier to see her come in. We can see our little director on the bridge with the master and the pilot. Our director shouts and gesticulates. He is carried below out of the way of the pilot—almost by force, for the channel is narrow, and the navigation

ticklish. Soon a great hawser clears the crowd before it like a broom, and the Sea Mew is safely moored in the harbour of the Bessin.

FETISHISM.

ACCORDING to Comte, fetishism is founded on the idea, among primitive races, that all bodies, natural and artificial, are animated by a life or spirit essentially similar to that animating the human frame, and differing only in intensity. It is remarkable that the Eskimo, according to Dr. Rink, believe that the whole visible world is ruled by supernatural powers, each having sway within certain limits. These powers are called *Inua*, and there is scarcely any object, physical or spiritual, which may not have its *Inua*. In some respects *Inua* corresponds with the soul, and mountains, lakes, and so on are also possessed of *Inua*, which require to be propitiated. Hence arose among the Eskimo the practice of wearing amulets, which possess virtue because they are still animated by the *Inua* with which they have been in contact, and the wearing and application of these amulets comes second only to invocation among the religious practices of these people. In the Comteist sense, therefore, they are fetish.

In the same sense, the South Sea Islanders' tabu, or consecration of special objects, may be considered fetish. The Fijians, as Mr. Stonehewer Cooper tells us in "Coral Lands," used the whale's-tooth as a propitiatory sacrifice, but it must also have been considered to hold a virtue in its own essence, because on the death of a chief, two of these teeth would be placed in his hands to throw at the tree which is supposed to bar the way to the regions of the blest. Yet we are not accustomed to regard either the Eskimo or the South Sea Islanders as fetish-worshippers.

Tylor defined fetishism as "the doctrine of spirits embodied in, or attached to, or conveying influence through certain material forms." It is, in short, as we have now come to regard it, the mere belief that certain objects are endowed with peculiar powers, and that in respect of these powers they are to be venerated. Any evidence of failure in the power ascribed will bring contumely on the object from the fetish-worshipper, and hence Sir John Lubbock has happily defined fetishism as "that stage of religious

thought in which man supposes he can force the deities to comply with his desires." This stage of thought, however, we may remark has not been confined to savage nations. There was a Catholic Queen of Spain who was so angry at the loss of her husband that she forbade her subjects to believe in God for six whole months "in order to give Him a lesson!" The doing of penance, and the offering of propitiatory candles for the intercession of the saints, may also be taken as evidence that in Catholic countries the belief is entertained that the Divine favour can be at least coaxed, if not compelled.

For fetishism proper, in the sense in which it is now commonly accepted, one must look to Africa, and particularly to the West Coast. This is emphatically "The Land of Fetish," and in a book recently published by Captain Ellis of Sierra Leone, under that very title, we have some curious and interesting accounts of the system.

We soon find that there are varieties in fetishism, as in all other forms of religion. Thus in Dahomey, ophiolatry, or serpent-worship, prevails, and the python is regarded as the emblem of bliss and prosperity. To kill a sacred serpent is a capital offence, and a child who may by chance touch or be touched by one must be kept at the fetish-house for a year, to be instructed in the mysteries. This is a species of fetishism which distinctly appropriates an object for worship, and it is, therefore, more accurately, idolatry.

On the Gold Coast, however, it is unsubstantial shadows and demons which are worshipped and feared. Every house in Whydah, on the Slave Coast, we are told, has before it a cone of baked clay, discoloured by the libations of palm-oil and palm-wine, and this is the fetish Azoon, who protects streets, houses, and buildings. Again, by the side of every road is seen a grotesque clay image of a human shape in a crouching attitude. This is Legba, the guardian of women, and propitiatory sacrifices to it are supposed to remove barrenness. The ocean, too, is fetish, and has a special service of priests, who "at certain seasons descend to the beach, shout forth a series of incantations, and request the sea to calm itself, throwing at the same time offerings of corn, cowries, and palm-oil into it. Sometimes, too, the King of Dahomey sends an ambassador, arrayed in the proper insignia, with a gorgeous umbrella and a rich dress, to his good friend the ocean. This ambassador is

taken far out to sea in a canoe, and is then thrown overboard, and left to drown or to be devoured by sharks." It is needless to add that the honour of this post is not much coveted in Dahomey. The most dreaded fetish is So, the god of thunder and lightning, who is supposed to strike with lightning those who disbelieve in or scoff at his powers, and hence it is unlawful to bury the bodies of those who have been killed by lightning. There is another fetish called Ho-ho, who protects twins; and other objects of worship are the sun, the moon, fire, the leopard, and the crocodile. But, although Captain Ellis speaks of these objects of worship as fetish, the religion is clearly a multiform idolatry, and not fetish in the accepted meaning of the word. The Dahomeans place a rope of grass round their houses to protect them from fire; a grotesque image in human shape on the door-posts is supposed to prevent the entry of evil spirits; and a fowl is nailed, with head downwards, to a post to prevent an unfavourable wind. These practices are of the nature of charms. They are fetish, but fetish only in the same sense as, to this day, in our own country, are the horse-shoes one sees nailed on to stable-doors, and the sixpences with holes, which many people carry about for luck. Similarly, the "water-sprinkling" of the Dahomeans, or, really, the blood-sprinkling, by the sacrifice of slaves, and the pouring of their blood upon the graves of the departed, is analogous to the saying of masses for the souls of dead Catholics. The frightful waste of human life at these and other ceremonials of the Dahomeans is, we are glad to hear, diminishing, but not so much through Christianising influences or British persuasion as because, to some extent, at any rate, "there are no longer any small independent tribes on the borders of Dahomey on whom war could be made, and from whom a constant supply of victims could be obtained." The persons now commonly sacrificed are criminals.

Thus we see that in Dahomey the objects which are fetish are specific, and, although numerous, are limited. Their worship, therefore, would be more accurately described as idolatry. For, in simple fetishism, anything may become fetish. A native of the Gold Coast, starting on an expedition of whatever character, selects as fetish the object which first strikes his eye on leaving his house. If this object brings him success, it is worshipped and preserved, much as the horse-shoe and

lucky sixpence are with us, for future luck. If it does not bring success it is jumped upon, spat upon, and in every way reviled, with the same object, in a less articulate form, as the Queen of Spain had in view. At Badagry, a town also on the Slave Coast, Captain Ellis saw more fetishes than at any other place. All about the houses and streets were clay figures, of human form, but with the teeth of dogs, sharks, leopards, etc., and crowned with feathers. In one case the feathers were red, and it was explained that this was to imitate the red hair of one trader who had visited the place, and who, presumably, had brought it luck. In the great central fetish-ground are to be seen such miscellaneous articles as broken pots and stools, knives, spear-heads, arrows, and even human skulls. Here there seems no specific worship of an object per se, but merely as representing a spirit or fate, while evil spirits or demons are supposed to be frightened away by the exhibition of objects for which they have an aversion. This is the simplest form of fetishism, and only on the Gold Coast, apparently, is this simple form preserved.

It is doubtful if we can regard the fetishism of Dahomey as a stage higher in religious belief. The reduction of worship from the general to the particular does not seem in practice anything of an improvement. At Bonny, for instance, where fetishism has acquired the specific or idolatrous form, human sacrifice is practised in a wholesale manner, such as we do not hear of on the Gold Coast. Notwithstanding the Christian missions at Bonny, fetishism, we are told, is everywhere rampant. Ju-ju is the favourite spirit, to whom a very common sacrifice is a young girl, who is tied to a stake at low water, and left to perish either by the rising tide or by sharks and crocodiles. A glimpse into the fetish-house was here obtained by Captain Ellis with difficulty. In the interior he saw vast numbers of skulls, of those who had been sacrificed to Ju-ju, preserved in wattle-racks, and there were also a large number of rude wooden images. At Porto Novo, a town only fifty miles from Lagos, "the Liverpool of West Africa," there is, opposite to the gates of the king's "palace," a row of fetish-huts, containing the images of a variety of deities, and here the people think it necessary to feed as well as to propitiate the spirits, or at any rate to supply them with water, which is placed in pans outside the huts. The disappearance

of the water by evaporation is accepted as proof of the bodily presence of the deities. Next to the fetish-huts is the sacrificial shed, which reeks with blotches of blood and other tokens of the ghastly and horrible rites performed in it. This, then, is fetishism plus idolatry in its most hideous aspect.

Farther north, in the Gambia and Sierra Leone districts, fetishism seems to have developed into skilful necromancy. The fetishmen are professional compounders of spells, and being well acquainted with the poisonous and curative qualities of vegetables unknown to the European pharmacopœia, they manage to effect some striking results. Poisoning in these regions is something of a fine art, and the only chance for a man who supposes that his food has been tampered with is to go to the fetish priest for another spell in the shape of an antidote, for which, of course, he must pay, and whole families are known to waste away and die from unknown diseases, until perhaps one, in desperation, calls in the fetishman. These fetishmen are said to be accomplished in all the subtlest forms of poison, not only such as act through the stomach, but others which are distributed over the clothing to permeate the skin, or are diffused through the atmosphere, to work their deadly effects by inhalation.

Among some of the tribes of these districts also, is a singular form of fetish known as Egugu, which Captain Ellis not infelicitously likens to the English "bogy." The Egugu man professes to be endowed with peculiar powers which enable him at once to scent the infidelity of a wife. He makes the round of the villages, and his favour is sought by offerings of all the most delicate dishes of the African cuisine. He lives on the fat of the land and the credulity of the people, which last he takes care to retain by a judicious exposure now and then. In Sherboro there exists a fraternity who are bound together by some mysterious ceremonies, whose nature is not apparent. One of their rites consists of human sacrifice, and it seems to be certain that one young girl, at least, is put to death by them in some horrible manner every year. A weird story is told by a French trader about how he surprised a party of them in the forest at night, being attracted by the agonising shrieks of the victim. When he reached the spot the savages had fled, but he found the body, still warm, of a girl from whom the heart had been torn out.

At Old Calabar, on the Niger Delta, there is a curious phase of fetishism, which consists in feeding the dead. When a person is buried, the relatives, before filling the earth into the grave, insert a long bamboo tube, whose orifice is brought to the surface. Down this tube are poured periodically palm-oil, palm-wine, and other liquids. In this custom one sees something analogous to the Fijian whale-tooth before mentioned. It is believed, also, by the natives of this portion of the coast, that the dead are afflicted with the same ailments as the living, and a man will often go to the European doctor for medicine to pour into the grave of his father or mother. This indicates some sort of faint glimmering sense of the immortality of the soul, and it has something about it which goes to support the Comteist definition of fetishism.

In their interesting book about the Gold Coast, Captains Burton and Cameron tell that the most frequent form of fetish there is the pot or koro, which is filled with water, oil, palm-wine, leaves, cowries, eggs, and all manner of things, for the use of the spirits. When the general mixture is stirred by the Komfo or fetishman, it is supposed to answer questions, and enable him to soothsay. This corresponds to the Obi of the West Indies, and it had its counterpart in the "witch's broth" of European nations. The whole thing is strongly suggestive of the fourth act of Macbeth. The same travellers, in steaming up the Ancobra river, passed two fetish-rocks in the channel on the side opposite to that used by the natives. Later in the day they were caught in a tremendous thunderstorm, which the natives gravely ascribed to the outrage of fetish in passing the rocks on the wrong side! Can we not find among one's own circle of acquaintances people who will ascribe the little mishaps and accidents of the day to their having got out of the wrong side of the bed? The spilling of salt, the sailor's objection to sailing on a Friday, and many other analogues, may be found in the superstition of our own people and our own day.

As for the charms, and spells, and other acts of fetish-worship, they are, perhaps, grosser in execution, but in character and meaning much the same as the practice of witchcraft, which obtained in many parts of our country almost to within the last generation. We have it on the authority of Miss Annie Keary and others, that witch-

craft was devoutly believed in forty years ago, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, not only among the peasantry, but even among the farmer-class. A well-to-do farmer of Nunnington even reprimanded the parson for scoffing at the popular beliefs, some of which really do not seem to have been much more rational than those of the lowest Africans.

It is curious to reflect how the whole human race is united by one invisible thread, differing in texture, or in thickness, or in adornment, but carrying the same fibre through the heart of it always. We like to talk in missionary meetings of our "poor black brethren," but until we consider this question of fetishism perhaps we do not realise how much they really are our brethren. For the rest, the christianising of the African races does not seem to progress as we like to think it does, if Captain Ellis's account be a truthful one.

'TWIXT CUP AND LIP.

A STORY.

"EVERYTHING we could wish for in a son! With sound Church principles, and the very house dear Edie has always had a fancy for. She is so well-qualified to take up her position in the county, dear child! I may truly say my cup of happiness is filled to the brim," Mrs. Woodcock concluded.

She had a deliberate, impressive manner, and a voice with a full, round roll in it, and could have delivered her husband the rector's sermons much better than he did. She was a comfortable, comely woman, one of the sort addicted to enveloping themselves in soft fleecy wraps, and purring complacently from the cushioned depths of big easy-chairs, as she did now, gazing with gentle pity on her friend Gertrude Bourne as on a low-born spinster, who possessed no rector of her own, nor rectory, nor yet a lovely eldest daughter going to be married to a baronet next Tuesday.

Miss Bourne sat knitting in the window-seat of the oddly-shaped apartment, too cozy for a landing, too wide for a passage, but by reason of having the rector's study, the store-room, and the staircase opening out of it, not to be considered as a sitting-room by any means. It was everybody's favourite halting-place on the road to everywhere in the house. The sewing-machine stood in one window, and Mrs. Woodcock's old-fashioned housekeeping

bureau between the other two. Her huge chintz-petticoated easy-chair had its place near the middle window, where Gertrude Bourne was resting after her journey. She was one of those stray women who, without husband or near kin of their own, seem in perpetual demand as sharers in other folks' merry-makings. When they are poor or weak-spirited they act as unpaid assistants; when rich or distinguished, as extra attractions. Miss Bourne belonged to the latter class. She was clever, well-connected, and wealthy; with a tiny little house in Mayfair, where deserving nephews and nieces were treated to a fortnight's pleasuring now and then, and where nice people of all sorts were wont to congregate. Also she had a pretty taste in wedding-presents. That she was not more often made use of by kind friends who wanted homes for the boys when there was sickness at school; or a yard of glacé silk at two shillings and elevenpence from somewhere in the City; or entertainment for themselves and their pet pastor during the May Meetings; was entirely due to Piper, her trusty maid, who ruled her for her good with a rod of iron, and presented a front of adamant to all attempts at imposition on her mistress's good-nature.

Gertrude Bourne and Juliet Damer had been school-friends, and the intimacy had survived into later life. Gertrude had been the confidante of Juliet's timid attachment to the new curate, and when he did come to the point, had worked upon the feelings of her uncle the bishop in his behalf to some purpose, and since then had given many a gentle push to the wheel of her friend's fortunes till it had rolled them into the goodly heritage of Honeymeade Rectory, where Mrs. Woodcock now reposed in dignified ease, looking down from the serene heights of her own prosperity on her less fortunate friend, who, half-conscious of the sentiment, kept her dark inscrutable eyes bent on her flickering needles, and, in her turn, from her heart of hearts pitied—did Mrs. Woodcock guess whom?

The rectory lawn stretched its green length beneath the windows, and a pleasant murmur of young voices floated up to them. They could see Mabel under the big ash-tree trying to pour out tea and read a magazine at the same time. Margaretta, the second girl, and her friend, Mrs. Leyland, were side by side in their big basket-chairs chattering confidences; and the little Leylands, who had been invited

to make hay, were plunging and rolling in the haycocks beyond. Edie, the eldest, was sitting a little apart, looking, as she nestled in her heap of soft hay, a reduced copy of her mother, plus a plate of strawberries on her lap, and a young fellow in mourning holding a Japanese parasol over her.

He was an old friend of Miss Bourne's. Someone had brought him to her house two seasons ago, when he was an unknown briefless barrister; and she had taken a fancy to the shy, dark-eyed youth, who could talk so well when he thought no one was listening to him, and who seemed so utterly friendless. So she welcomed him, and made much of him, and when, one fine day, society found out that it had another new poet in its midst, Gertrude thought better of her own discernment for having anticipated the discovery.

"I always knew he was made for great things," she said; "and yet— He seems one for whom there may be greater still in store; as if it might be granted him to live out his aspirations instead of merely rhyming them."

So she had spoken a year ago. "Songs of Captivity" had reached a tenth edition; but the author had become Sir Charles Penthony, of Whitelands, and was to marry Miss Edith Woodcock next Tuesday. Ah, well-a-day!

"How did it all come about?" she asked abruptly.

"Quite romantically," said Mrs. Woodcock, settling herself for a gossip. "You know, when first we came here, how we always fancied there was something odd at Whitelands. Sir Gilbert and Lady Penthony were most pleasant neighbours, and seemed so attached to one another, but the son was never mentioned, and we thought it strange that he should be left to himself in London, getting into quite a Bohemian set, my dear—artists, and government clerks who write plays, and actors, you know. It is much to his credit that he has always been so steady, I am sure."

"Very much so, considering the temptations," Gertrude assented with a suppressed quiver in her voice, and a laugh in her eyes.

"It was not till poor Sir Gilbert's first attack of gout, when the dear rector's ministrations proved so blest to him, that we ascertained the true state of affairs. Lady Penthony—his second wife—had from the first kept father and son apart. She had provoked Charlie into a dreadful quarrel, after which he left Whitelands,

and the poor old gentleman was so completely under her thumb that he dared not write or make an attempt to see him. Charlie's letters and attempts at reconciliation were kept from him, and his mind poisoned against him by the designing woman, who, most providentially, was visiting some of her own relations when the attack came on, and the dear rector happened to call. Of course, we sent for Charlie directly, and asked him to stay here, till his father insisted on his going to Whitelands. Poor boy! he was much touched by our interference on his behalf, and struck by his father's admiration of Edie. The old gentleman was devoted to her, and I believe told Charlie of his great wish for the marriage just before he died. Lady Penthony behaved shamefully, and utterly refused to return to Whitelands while Charlie was there. I hardly think she knew how near the end was, though. Charlie nursed his father most devotedly to the last, and since then has taken up his new duties—with the dear rector's assistance—in a most praiseworthy manner. Shall we go down and join the young people?"

Miss Bourne assenting, Mrs. Woodcock rose and led the way up steps and down steps, and round corners, to the little glass door which opened on the garden.

Margaretta sprang up and ran to meet them. Mabel dropped her magazine amongst her tea-cups and followed. Edie took things more leisurely, as befitted her prospective dignity. All three were fine, fair, healthy-looking girls, of the dairy-fed order of beauty, with round pink-and-white faces, abundant silky hair, white teeth, and wide-open blue eyes. They all looked pretty and fresh in their shady hats and summer print dresses, but Edith was the tallest, with the prettiest figure and most regular features. She turned with a graceful little gesture to hand her strawberries to her cavalier, but, behold, he had gone with the rest to join the little chattering group round the new comers. There was much laughter and confusion of greetings. Mrs. Leyland had to be introduced, fresh garden-chairs brought out, the children hunted away from the strawberry-dish, and Mabel's tea-tray re-arranged.

When they settled down, Miss Bourne found herself next Edie, with her lover lying picturesquely outstretched on the hay at their feet.

"We missed you this season," she said, "and wondered much."

"Ah, I ought to have written to you above all others," Sir Charles answered penitently; "but so much happened to me all at once that I got bewildered and lost count of time. I did try to see you, once or twice, you know, in the two days I spent in town. I had to meet my lawyers and see with my own eyes that poor Ducie's picture was really hung, and uncommonly well it looked too."

"Better still, it's sold! Oh, I have great news for you. A dealer bought it, then a rich American took a fancy to it. The dealer sold it, and gave Ducie a commission for another, and the American has ordered a companion picture. He came almost crying to tell me. Why, has he not written to you?"

"I dare say he preferred to leave the telling to you. Edie, you know about Ducie—the man who could never paint anything to please himself till some lines of mine took possession of him, and he made such a story out of them as I had never dreamt?"

Edie smiled with gentle indifference.

"We may give him an order some day," she said; "the hall at Whitelands wants pictures, unless we do it up with old oak and armour, like Lord Naseby's."

"You found time to do me a great kindness in the midst of your business," Miss Bourne went on presently. "I sent my young friend from Liverpool, Paul Wylie, with your note of introduction to Mr. Normandy, who has been most kind and helpful to him."

"What! You don't mean to say that Normandy is going to bring his play out at the Diversity!" exclaimed Sir Charles.

"Oh dear no! He has done better. He has convinced him of the impossibility of its ever being brought out anywhere, and has promised that if Paul will go home, study stage traditions and limitations, and produce something really actable, he'll think of it next year."

"And you call that help?"

"To be sure I do. Paul has gone back to his desk with hopeful employment for his leisure hours instead of throwing up his situation to roam about London, a misunderstood genius with an unsaleable tragedy in his pocket. He'll write himself out in a year, and make a very respectable cotton-broker's clerk in the end."

Miss Bourne checked herself abruptly, for Edie looked by this time politely bored, and just a little contemptuous. She had no part in those days of Charlie's life when

he wasn't in society, and was minded to ignore them as completely and speedily as might be. Gertrude was quick to take the hint and let the conversation drift on to Switzerland, where the young pair were to spend their honeymoon.

"Of course it's much too early in the season," Edie lamented.

She was evidently bent on conducting all the proceedings on most orthodox principles. Fortunately Gertrude had just been present at a marriage in very high life, and was able to describe the arrangements of Lady Alberta and the earl, which, to Edie's satisfaction, exactly coincided with her programme. Sir Charles seemed intent on gratifying her lightest fancy. His manner to her was the perfection of chivalrous devotion, as hers to him was of graceful, maidenly dignity. When the party dispersed, and Gertrude found herself alone in her room, waiting for Piper to dress her for dinner, she sat down and gave herself a severe scolding for all her ungenerous misgivings. How well they looked together! she thought. He slight and dark, with his finely-strung nervous organisation manifest in every movement of his delicate hands and rapid glances of his bright, expressive eyes. She, fair, plump, placid, with a determined curve in her soft, white chin, and a certain deliberation of manner and speech which accorded well with the calm steady gaze of her china-blue eyes and the firm line of the fresh red lips. A wife who will support his credit in county society, manage the household, her family, her parish on the correctest principles; never exceed her allowance, or come down late to breakfast. What can a man want more?

Piper finished adjusting her satin skirts as she asked herself the question, put a final artistic touch to the filmy mass of lace round her throat, handed her her fan, and allowed her to descend to the drawing-room, where Edie and her lover were seated demurely, one on each side of the open window.

"Have you never received a reply from Lord Glenara?" Edie was asking.

"No, dear; but we are not waiting for his consent; he may never take any more notice of me. He was indignant at my father's second marriage, you know, and may have only wanted to befriend me then to spite my step-mother."

"Don't speak disrespectfully and unkindly, Charles dear, of an uncle—in Lord Glenara's position. Let us, at any rate, do our duty by him," was the gentle reproof.

"Right now, as ever, oh queen! You will make me a model nephew in time."

"To an uncle—in Lord Glenara's position," Gertrude could not refrain from amending.

"Yes, that will be the way all through their lives," she sighed to herself that night. "Edie will keep him up to her standard of social propriety, and make a model squire of him at last; but that that should be the end of Charlie!"

Gertrude felt like a conspirator next morning when she descended into the pretty morning-room, where Edie, fresh and sweet as a pink in her crimp blue cambric, with not a hair out of place on her glossy head, was pouring out tea and coffee with minutest regard to individual peculiarities of taste.

She had scarcely seated herself when a shadow darkened the window behind her, and Sir Charles, flushed with haste and excitement, stepped into their midst, a letter in his hand.

"I am so glad to find you all here together," he exclaimed. "Here is something I must settle at once, or you must for me. Here's Lord Glenara's answer to my letter. Congratulations, of course, and then—as he says he has a subject of the utmost importance to discuss with me—he wants to know if I will go over to him for a few days before my marriage, 'unless,' as he says, 'you can induce my fair future niece to spend a honeymoon in the wilds of Glenara. The days pass so swiftly at my time of life, and I get fearful of delays.' Now what am I to do? I can start at eleven, and catch the Irish mail. I should reach Glenara at mid-day to-morrow, and could just get home by Tuesday morning. Or shall we agree to go after, Edie?"

"Certainly not," was the prompt reply. "Visiting so soon scarcely seems the proper thing to do. It is not as if he had offered to lend us the castle—besides, I do not like Ireland."

"That settles it. Then off I go. Here, I'll leave you the letter. I can't imagine what he wants with me."

"One moment, Charles," spoke the rector. "Considering that—ha—family affection that has—hem—subsisted unbroken between you and Lord Glenara, have you any grounds for supposing that he—ha—may see the propriety of offering anything—hem—in the way of an allowance?"

"Very likely. He once wished to settle something on me—when I left home, you know. He was devoted to my mother."

"Then," rolled forth the rector's impressive baritone; "then you cannot feel justified in neglecting so imperative a call of duty. It would be—ha—unseemly to sacrifice your aged uncle's wishes to mere personal gratification. If you cannot go later"—this with a dubious glance at Edie which betrayed very little hope of affecting her views—"it is my decided opinion that you should give him the time he asks for at once."

"Oh, papa, put off the wedding!" protested Mabel and Margaretta.

"I must write to Wormuns at once, then," said Mrs. Woodcock, thinking of the breakfast. "He must know about the ices."

"But, Edie——" Sir Charles began beseechingly.

"Well, dear, if it is for your good, why should I object?" spoke she with sweet reasonableness. "You needn't start in such a hurry then, you know, and if you get back by Tuesday week——"

"Oh no, my dear, that won't do; your papa and I are invited to the palace for that week, you know."

"Tuesday fortnight, then. It really can't matter much to you, and it will be so much better for Switzerland," decided the fair bride-elect, and, as usual, hers was the conclusion that every one adopted as fittest and best.

Miss Bourne bade adieu to the rectory next morning, and hurried back to town to invite some country cousins to whom a fortnight in what yet remained of the season would be unexpected bliss. Sundry notes reached her now and then from Honeymeade, containing commissions or appeals for advice from Mrs. Woodcock.

"Do come to me a day or two before the wedding," she wrote. "I feel quite unnerved when I think of all that has to be gone through all over again."

So, once more, a sunshiny Saturday morning saw Gertrude and her faithful Piper alighting at the little wayside station where the rectory pony-carriage was awaiting her, Edie driving, and Sir Charles beside her. He gave place to Miss Bourne, intending to walk home, only lingering for a few words pending the disposal of Piper and the luggage.

"You were pleased with Glenara?" she asked.

"More than pleased; but I mustn't begin about the place now, nor my uncle. Do you ever read Miss Edgeworth? Do you remember Count O'Halloran? the very

ideal of an Irish nobleman, a type I had fancied as extinct as the Irish elk."

"I am almost tempted to wish it were sometimes," said Edie with a sharp note in her voice. "Charles has come home blindly infatuated about things Irish. He has actually pledged himself to our going there."

"There are many good reasons why we should," Sir Charles replied briefly, and then they started.

Miss Bourne had a long talk with him that evening. He had been much touched by his welcome by his uncle, who had received him as a long absent son. The rector's provisions of a settlement were correct. Lord Glenara was wealthy and childless, the last of his line. He had for long years lived secluded at Glenara, devoting himself to his people and his land. His object in life had been to work out certain theories of his own as to the management of his estates, theories which, so far, had proved complete successes. His tenantry were peaceful, thriving, contented, devoted to him with an ardent personal loyalty which was new and strange, yet perfectly comprehensible to Charlie.

"He is a born leader, one for men to follow to the death," he said; "but it grieves him to think how much depends on his own personal influence. When he dies all his works perish with him, and he is failing fast. He took me about and introduced me to every creature in the place, showed me all his projected improvements, made me go into everything. It was as though he desired a witness of his work before it all fell back into its primitive chaos."

"And the people?" asked Gertrude.

"Don't, please!" expostulated Edie.

"Charlie has been expounding the merits of the Irish race to us all for a week past. Mayn't he leave off now?"

Sir Charles ceased obediently for the moment, but resumed the subject on Edie's departure. It seemed to have taken possession of him. His kinsman's devoted life, the interests that depended on him, the splendid material that lay ready to his hand in the land and the people.

"The country was bog, the people half-naked savages, when he came amongst them," Charlie said; "it seems incredible now. If so much can be done in one man's lifetime, what might not a generation or two more of wise rulers effect? I mean rulers—not landlords. Chiefs of the race who would be willing to live and die for their people as a chieftain should—who

would count wealth, rank, culture, as so many treasures given them to be held in trust for and expended on the people God has given into their hands."

Charlie's voice had grown low and earnest, and his eyes were shining with the light of a far-off vision as he spoke; but a glance and graceful little gesture from Edie brought him to a sudden stop, and, obediently following her to the piano, he sang and turned over music for the rest of the evening.

An unsettled Sunday followed. Then a Monday of floral decoration and packing. On Monday afternoon a telegram to Miss Woodcock.

"Why to me?" asked Edie. "It's for Charles. Such an address! I wonder it reached anyone. Why, it's from Lord Glenara's secretary. 'His lordship died last night. You are urgently required here.' How aggravating! It will just unsettle Charlie. If nothing has been left to him why should he go? If he has had a legacy he may just as well stay away; he won't lose it!" She looked for sympathy to Gertrude with an aggrieved little frown on her white forehead.

"Something may be due to the last wishes of an uncle in Lord Glenara's position," dryly replied Miss Bourne. "But here is Sir Charles coming across the lawn. You can discuss it with him."

Sir Charles entered, looking grieved and perplexed, by one door as Gertrude discreetly withdrew by another, to wait, and wonder, and sigh, and speculate over her knitting, and laugh at herself for being more keenly touched by the events of the little drama which was passing before her than most of the actual performers seemed to be.

"Please come back," said Edie's gentle voice in the doorway; "Charles has had another telegram which we want to show you."

"From my uncle's solicitors. It came last night. This letter followed by this morning's post."

Gertrude read both, while Sir Charles paced up and down the room, and Edie went to summon her father and mother to the council.

Lord Glenara had died suddenly, leaving instructions that his nephew should be sent for as soon as possible. The Glenara estates were unentailed, and he had left everything unreservedly to Sir Charles.

"What a pity the title doesn't go with the property," sighed Edie, returning with

Mrs. Woodcock. "You must start at once, Charles. Of course the wedding ought to be postponed now. We must see that a proper notice goes to the Court Journal, mamma."

Sir Charles stepped suddenly before her, holding out his hands to her.

"Edie, will you send me away alone again? Cannot your father marry us quietly to-morrow morning, and let us go together?"

"My dear Charles! It's impossible to go from a wedding to a funeral. I couldn't do such a thing. Besides, I have no mourning to take with me."

"That is conclusive, I suppose," he answered in an odd, impatient tone, and the question dropped.

Miss Bourne travelled up to town with him next morning.

"As your wedding, when it does come off, will be a very quiet one, I suppose, I shall start for the Engadine next month, so good-bye," she said as they parted. "Write sometimes and tell me of your doings."

Charlie promised, and bade farewell.

He kept his word, writing constantly and freely, as secure of her full sympathy. He told her of all his uncle's wise forethought for him, of the directions he had left for his assistance, and the pains he had taken to simplify and set in order all the business details which would require Charles's personal attention; of the heart-felt grief of the Glenara people, and their touching confidence in him as his uncle's representative.

"What am I to do?" he wrote in dire perplexity. "I am wanted here, if ever man was. No agent will do—even if I could find one. I have no tie to England. Whitelands can be sold at any moment. It was only bought, to please my step-mother, when my Australian uncle died and left us some money. There is a rich retired Indian officer I know of, Colonel Chestleton, who will give me a fancy price for it any day. It must be a question for Edie to consider."

After that, Miss Bourne was not surprised that the letters from Glenara suddenly ceased.

July came to an end. Piper insisted on a speedy change of air for herself and her mistress; the house was shut up; and Gertrude, ready packed for Pontresina, found herself with a spare day to bestow on Honeymeade Rectory in answer to Mrs. Woodcock's urgent invitation. The big easy-chair had travelled out to the south terrace,

and in it she found her friend basking in the August sunshine in her usual state of serene content with life and her surroundings generally.

"The girls are at the church, finishing the harvest decorations. We have the Thanksgiving Service this evening. I hope you are not too tired to go," she purred. "We are to have tea at Bareacres Farm first. Colonel Chestleton lives there, you know, while he is looking out for a house. I want you to see him, dear. That was why I asked you to come down."

"Indeed? Is one of the girls——"

"Hush, dear! we must not be premature in our rejoicings; but I think he is here so very often, and his attentions to Margaretta are so very marked, that I shouldn't wonder if she were to be the first married, after all. A very agreeable man, of good family, with excellent principles—just what we could wish for in a son."

"You are indeed a fortunate woman, Juliet," her friend replied with a little ring of semi-scorn in her voice. "I remember you said exactly the same of Charlie."

Bareacres Farm was a queer, white-washed, many-cornered, tile-roofed construction, with a vine running wildly all over the front, glimpses of rich oriental hangings in the open lattice-windows, and a low green gate, on which leant a tall, soldierly, grey-moustached gentleman, awaiting his guests.

They found tea ready for them in the low parlour, which was hung with Indian splendours of brocade and embroideries, and bestrewn with valuable bric-à-brac, which bespoke the colonel's sagacity as a collector.

Gertrude liked the look of her host, and felt excited and sympathetic when she noticed his eager start when the click of the latched gate was heard and the girls' voices sounded outside.

In they came, Edie first, bright and gracious, wearing the prettiest of her trousseau-dresses. She seemed rather embarrassed on greeting Miss Bourne, and replied somewhat shortly to her enquiries about her absent lover, but soon regained her usual sweet serenity.

After the service the rector joined them with one of the curates, and all strolled home together through the warm still dusk, and lingered about the rectory lawns till supper-time, when they gathered round the lamp-lighted table; the girls at the farther end. The Leylands had strolled in, and the curate's aunt had appeared from

somewhere. It was quite natural that Edie should wait for a quieter time to speak of her own personal affairs to Gertrude, who could only gather from the general conversation that, at all events, no wedding was immediately impending.

Some hours later, when Piper had been dismissed for the night, and Gertrude was sleepily turning bedwards, she was surprised by a gentle tap at her door.

"May I come in?" asked Edie, pale and precise in her blue be-ribboned dressing-gown. "I have something very important to say to you."

"My child, what is it? What has happened?"

"I am in great distress and trouble," was the reply, in tones considerably less agitated than the questioner's; "and I have come to ask a great favour of you. No one knows what I have gone through lately." Edie wiped away a lady-like tear—not one of your vulgar, nose-reddening, eyelid-blistering secretions, but a gentle drop, just enough to manifest real emotion. "In justice to Sir Charles as well as to myself, I cannot go on with our engagement, and I have written to end it all to-night."

"Edie! Oh, how will he bear it?"

"If you will read these letters you will see how completely I am overlooked in his plans for his future life. He goes through the form of asking my advice on every point, but evidently never lets my wishes or opinions make the slightest change in his projects. He says he cannot sell his Irish property now, and will not leave it to an agent. I am to be sacrificed without hesitation to his quixotic schemes. I should be wanting in a proper sense of what is due to myself if I gave in."

Gertrude wasn't listening to a single word. She had taken the letters, and was rapidly glancing over them—letters written in the fulness of Charles's heart, with never a doubt of his sweetheart's love and sympathy; not making light of her possible disappointment at the change from Whitelands to Glenara, but full of schemes for brightening up the splendid gloomy old castle into a home worthy of his darling. He promised her to arrange for part of every year to be spent in England. They should bring home visitors, make friends with some of their widely scattered neighbours, find society in Dublin now and then. Only let her come. All that was disheartening and perplexing in his work would be met with new courage if she were by his side—and so on, and so on. Gertrude blushed, as she

let her stranger eyes fall on the pages of sweet lover's fooling which Edie handed her so unconcernedly. She folded them up, and asked in a hard unsympathetic tone:

"What can I do about it? You seem to have made up your mind."

"There will be so much gossip," Edie objected, "and people are so unkind. Couldn't I go with you to Pontresina—just till the fuss is over?"

Miss Bourne sat meditating, a hot flush on her thin cheek and her black brows drawn down.

"No, Edie, I can't take you. I shall not go myself," she said at last. "I am not blaming you. You are doing the best thing for yourself, I believe; but you can't realise what your resolve will cost him. Have you sent your letter yet?"

"No; but I have quite resolved."

"I don't ask you to change your resolution, only to keep that letter back for two days. Let it reach him, when he has one friendly face near him into which he can look for comfort. My boy! My poor Charlie!"

Edie looked mildly surprised at the outburst.

"Do you suppose he really will mind it so much? I will keep the letter back, or, if you like, you shall take it to him."

"No," cried Gertrude with a shiver. "There, say no more about it. Good-night—or, good-bye. I shall start for Glenara to-morrow morning," and Edie departed to close her blue eyes in calm slumber as soon as her head touched its pillow, while the poor, lonely, foolish woman in the next room, who was nothing to anybody in the whole affair, tossed, and sobbed, and moistened her pillow with angry tears, or winced and quivered as she thought of the coming anguish—of somebody else.

The russet and umber hues of October lay warm over the land when next she beheld Honeymeade. Mrs. Woodcock and her big chair were established in their winter quarters opposite the crackling wood-fire in the dressing-room.

"So good of you to come, so perfectly sweet," was Gertrude's greeting from the rector's wife, as she sank back again into her cushioned nest, and folded her white hands on her velvet lap.

"I thought I should like to come and cheer you in your desolation. How strange the house seems with only Mabel about."

"Ah, it is a trial! Only parents know what it is to part with a daughter or two."

I wish you could have seen the brides, though, Gertrude," said Mrs. Woodcock, rousing to enthusiasm. "They looked perfect. To think of it being dear Edie that Colonel Chestleton admired after all! Of course, while she was hampered by that unhappy engagement, he, as a man of honour, could do nothing; but now, she will be actually mistress of Whitelands after all! How thankful we should be that our short-sighted plans are sometimes overruled for our good! Why, if it had been Margaretta who had married Colonel Chestleton, what would have become of poor Claud Braithwaite, who has loved her from the first day he came here as curate; though, of course, he had no chance whatever then of being able to marry."

"Till his father providentially brought on a fit of apoplexy by trying to catch a train, and left him two thousand a year," Gertrude concluded. "Yes, you are right to be thankful. Still, if Edie had married Sir Charles, and Margaretta the colonel, then he could have taken Mabel."

Mrs. Woodcock looked as if she had received a new idea. She paused to examine it.

"No, dear," she purred again presently; "it seems worldly to speculate on such matters. Let us be content with what has been bestowed upon us, and rest assured that whatever happens, all is for the best."

Miss Bourne gazed dreamily into the fire for a few minutes. A vision of Glenara rose before her eyes; of Charlie, lonely, saddened, but not discouraged, working out his appointed task without help or sympathy, bearing uncomplainingly the penalties of his many mistakes; hoping for no earthly reward of his labours, ever realising the truth of the wise man's words, that "there is in man a Higher than love of Happiness; he can do without Happiness, and in place thereof find Blessedness;" and, as the vision faded, she turned with glowing eyes and a proud half-smile to her friend.

"You are right, Juliet. This end is something far better than anything we could have planned. Far better so."

AN ALIBI AND ITS PRICE.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

BY THEO GIFT.

CHAPTER VI.

BREAKFAST was late at Guelder Lodge. It always was so when Mrs. Pentreath had been out at a whist-party the night before;

but when that lady came down to it, her face and manner were redolent of more than usual complacency. What wonder, either, when the day had opened with almost spring-like warmth? The sun was shining balmily; there was no east wind—that surest ruffler of temper to all who have bones to ache and nerves to jar; and, to crown all, she had not only won nine-and-sixpence the previous night to her own hand, but had once held three aces and the king of trumps in it at the same time.

Hetty was down before her, and presented rather a contrast to her hostess, looking ill and languid, with dark shadows under her eyes, and no more colour in her pretty face than that shown by the ragged petals of the white chrysanthemums swaying in the wind outside; but these signs were amply accounted for by her headache of yesterday, and simply caused Mrs. Pentreath to give her a more kindly kiss, and address her in a gentler tone and manner than she had used for some time back towards her troublesome little protégée. Indeed, it would have been difficult to find a pleasanter or more peaceful-looking breakfast-table. Outside, a turquoise sky and emerald lawn, the latter still sparkling in patches with the frost-diamonds which were fast melting in the mellow sunshine, save where the feathering, deep-green boughs of cedars or deodars made strips of shade across the velvety turf; inside, a luxurious room, crowded with comforts and prettinesses, and bright with a great glowing fire which blazed and sparkled on steel and silver, on snowy cloth and dainty food, on Mrs. Pentreath's white hair and handsome features, and on little Hetty, with her soft black curls and pale face, and quaint woollen gown of some warm, dark-red material, cut short enough to show the tiny feet in their neat shoes and black silk stockings, and with deep ruffles of yellowish lace turned back from throat and wrist.

There was not much of what could be called conversation in the room, even after Hickson had finished his solemn ministering to the two ladies' meal, and had retired to his own regions. Mrs. Pentreath, indeed, talked rather volubly at first, narrating her card triumphs of the night before, and chuckling a little over them; and Hetty listened, and at intervals gave faint smiles of assent; but the girl was strangely wanting in her usual animation, and volunteered scarcely a word on her own account. In truth, she was partly occupied in debating

within herself how to word her request for leave of absence, and whether she should wait to propound it till after Mr. Hamilton's visit or not. She felt sure he would come this morning. He had told her that he should count the minutes till he saw her again the day before, and if something had occurred to prevent his calling then, he would be the more certain to do so early to-day. But then the question was, how could she manage to see him alone, so as to make that confession to him which was weighing on her heart, and—how would he receive it?

Somehow, she no longer felt half so happy or confident on this subject as she had done on the day previous. Suppose, after all, he did not trust her thoroughly? Suppose he were to say that a man must have some grounds for insulting a woman before he would dare to do so; or even that a woman who had been so insulted was scarcely fit to be a clergyman's wife; or suppose, though he did not say this, she could see the thought in that hard look which had frightened her once or twice before in his face—what should she, what could she do then? Nothing but let him go; for how, unless he had perfect confidence in her, could she hold him to her? Let him go, and then ask Mrs. Pentreath for an indefinite leave, and go away herself—away from her present pleasant home and the people who had been so kind and so cruel to her, and had made and marred the happiness of her life; away—where she hardly knew, or how even to find those little-known kindred of her dead mother, if so be that one of them would take her in till she could seek out something to do for herself.

But this was a sombre prospect after all, one born of sleepless hours and overstrung nerves, and one that she scarcely contemplated for a moment in reality. She might have done so if it had been the case that she had any guilt to confess, any wrong or doubtful doings of her own; for she had learnt by experience that the vicar could be both stern and jealous on occasion; and though the knowledge had not made her love him less, it had mingled with her love a flavour of that wholesome awe, the absence of which in their wives it is the fashion of husbands nowadays to lament. As things were, however, it was Captain Pentreath's faults which were in question, not her own, and all she meant to tell Mr. Hamilton was that the young officer had forced his company on her on the way back from church, had been very

rude to her, and had threatened to make mischief between her and her lover by showing the latter a photograph which he had stolen from her. She had it safe, and she would show it to him (for reasons of her own she felt an extreme repugnance to mentioning how she got it back, and was sure he would not hear it from anybody else), and she would explain about the writing on the other side, and then—or, better, first of all perhaps—would beg him for her guardian's sake, and in remembrance of all her past kindness, not to let himself be provoked into quarrelling with his cousin, or—

Hush! there he was.

Breakfast was over, and Mrs. Pentreath had been called out to consult with the gardener about the cutting back of certain plants in the greenhouse; but Hetty was still sitting near the table absorbed in these reflections when a quick, well-known step on the gravel and sharp, decisive knock announced the visitor she was expecting, and almost before she could move he was in the room, having put aside the servant and entered unannounced.

Hetty sprang up, all her troubles banished by the first sound of his voice, and came to meet him.

"Oh, I am so glad!" she said joyfully, and was putting out both hands to him when she stopped short, frightened by a look in his face she had never seen before. Stern it was, assuredly, sterner than she had ever seen it; but that was not all, for it was pale almost to ghastliness, and wearing an expression of pain and even agitation, so different from its usual frank, steady composure, that Hetty's hands fell again involuntarily, and she stepped back a little, asking: "Is anything the matter? I have been so wishing you would come to-day."

"And I should have come in any case, but are you alone—quite alone? There is something I want to say to you."

He had taken her hand and held it as he spoke; but his manner was preoccupied and unloverlike, and he did not kiss her. Hetty's nerves were the reverse of strong that morning, and she began to tremble. Was it possible after all that Captain Pentreath had been beforehand with her? But the vicar had felt the trembling of the little hand in his, and the stern abstraction of his face broke up into anxious concern.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" he said quickly. "You look dreadfully ill. I never saw you so pale, and your eyes—Have you been crying? What is it?"

Great Heavens! has the news reached here first after all?"

"What news?" asked Hetty, bewildered in her turn. "I have not heard any."

But the quick, impetuous questions, and the searching look which accompanied them, had confused her. Her foolish fingers trembled more than ever, and the colour mounted into her face in such a vivid blush that it was little wonder if the keen eyes watching her did not deem her answer conclusive, and grew graver with displeased surprise. Perhaps it was because of this that his answer came so abruptly:

"The news which I received an hour back, and which I came here to ask your assistance in breaking to my aunt, is that Ernest has been arrested on a charge of murder—murder of a brother officer with whom he quarrelled yesterday evening, and who was found shot——"

"Shot!" If the bullet had passed through the girl's body she could not have sprung back with a sharper cry. "Shot—murdered! Oh, George, no! Was that what he meant? Oh, surely—surely, he couldn't."

The vicar looked at her in great surprise.

"Could not mean what? What do you mean, Hetty? Is it possible you knew anything of this?"

Hetty went crimson all over in a moment.

"I? No, no, no; of course not," she stammered, heaping one negative on another in her embarrassment, though her lips were shaking so much they could hardly form the words. "I don't even understand what you are saying. Captain Pentreath murder anyone! Oh, it can't be possible. What would his mother say if she heard you?"

"Say, Hetty Mavors! Why, that it is a lie."

Unseen by both, a third person had entered the room while they were speaking, a tall stately old lady, in black silk, and with soft white hair framing a haughty, handsome face. It was pitiful, the ghastly change that came over it as she spoke, the words coming in hoarse, laboured gasps:

"My son Ernest! George, how dare you! Tell me at once what this is. Some hoax. My son——" And there she broke off, and, before either could prevent it, she staggered and fell heavily, like one stricken through the heart and dead.

It is easy to imagine the consternation of the two thus interrupted, and for the moment all thought of themselves, aye,

even of Ernest Pentreath and the terrible tidings respecting him, were forgotten in the more terrible doubt as to whether the shock of those tidings had not in very truth brought death to the mother who gave him life. It looked like it. George Hamilton raised her carefully, and laid her on the sofa; and Hetty hung over her, chafing her hands, fanning her, and applying restoratives; but all seemed in vain, and by the time the lady's-maid had been summoned, and Hickson sent off in hot haste for the doctor, the news had somehow leaked out (as bad news invariably will in the most reticent of households) that something dreadful had happened to "the captain." He had murdered somebody, or he had been murdered himself (Hickson held one story, and the cook the other), and he or some other body was in prison and going to be hung for shooting the other body: worst of all—and this was the only certain part of the whole matter—the shock of hearing about it had nearly killed his mother.

Nearly, but not quite. It was only a fainting fit, though an unusually severe one; and as Hetty knelt beside her, gazing on the marble features and watching with streaming eyes the doctor's efforts at restoring consciousness, every memory of late unkindness faded out before the thought of all that she owed to the woman so sorely smitten; and while she grieved from the depths of her innocent heart for having ever given her either trouble or annoyance on Captain Pentreath's account, she felt thankful at least that she had not added to it by complaining of the latter's conduct on the previous day.

By-and-by, however, Mrs. Pentreath began to revive. The eyelids fluttered, the lips lost their livid ashen hue; and after a time she was even able to look about her, and, true to herself, to force a faint smile on recognising the doctor, as she murmured:

"It is nothing—nothing at all; some foolish joke. I hope they have not told you."

"Told me what? That you tripped and fell over one of those stupid Persian-rugs of yours? Indeed they did then, and how often have I told you that I couldn't bear such mantraps in the house!" said the doctor cheerfully, all the more so, indeed, that he had already extracted the true history of the seizure from the vicar, and was anxious above all things to prevent her own mind from recurring to it. He thought he had succeeded, for Mrs. Pen-

treath smiled again a little less feebly, and answered that they were not as safe as carpets. She must have the corners tacked down.

"The fact was," with a small forced laugh, more pitiful to those who saw it than any tears, "she had been up very late dissipating the night before, and that always made her sleepy and stupid in the morning. If they would not think her very lazy, she should like a little nap." But when the doctor had gone, declaring that nothing could be better for her, all Mrs. Pentreath's assumption of playfulness and composure vanished in an instant. Her face seemed to become suddenly haggard and livid, like that of a woman of eighty, and she sat bolt upright, clutching Hetty's hands in hers so tightly that the girl almost cried out, as she bade her tell what there was to tell at once, or, better still, send for the vicar to do so. Was it all madness or a dream, that they had ventured to speak of Ernest in connection with a murder, or what—what had happened to him?

Alas for the poor mother! it was no dream, though all that George Hamilton could tell either her or Hetty were the bare facts he had learnt that morning from a telegram sent to him by Ernest's solicitor, and which ran as follows:

"Captain Pentreath arrested on charge of murder. Club quarrel last evening. Other man found shot two hours later. P. denies charge. Break news to family."

But as the day went on more tidings came in rapidly, and, despite all the efforts of the family to keep them a secret, became speedily known to the household in general, and even diffused about the neighbourhood, with every detail and amplification which the proneness of human nature to gossip and exaggeration could suggest.

Divested of these latter embellishments, however, the story, as even the heart-broken mother and the shuddering girl who waited on her with a daughter's sympathy, were forced to hear it, was as I shall briefly tell it below.

Captain Pentreath had arrived at his club about lunch-time on the previous day, and in a mood which was noticed even then as being the reverse of amiable. Perhaps his irritability was increased by the fact that one or two men to whom he attempted to talk appeared too much engaged in their papers and magazines to be able to afford him anything but the briefest answers, while one or two others, known to be rather special chums of his in general, went

out almost as soon as he made his appearance. Anyhow, he left the club himself very soon afterwards, but returned again early in the same evening, and at a time when it happened to be rather full of men who had either dined there or dropped in immediately afterwards. Amongst the company was a middle-aged officer, who had just returned on sick leave from India, and who was known to belong to Captain Pentreath's late regiment there. Possibly for this reason several of the visitors drew on one side, as if to facilitate the meeting between the two, and it was observed that Pentreath looked very red and excited—some said embarrassed—as he went up to his old comrade and offered him his hand. Whether Major Hollis did refuse his altogether in return, or whether, as another version of the story went, he only gave the younger officer two fingers and then turned on his heel, was not clearly known, and is not material; but almost immediately afterwards high words were heard between the two men. Captain Pentreath accusing the new comer of slandering him and undermining his character; and Major Hollis retorting that a man who had caused a married lady's name to become a common theme for club gossip of the most disrespectful nature, had no character to undermine; and further accusing him of having plumed himself on favours he had never received; or which, if he had received, would have been as disgraceful to himself as they were ruinous to the donor.

The quarrel grew so hot at last that several of the other gentlemen were obliged to interfere, and the antagonists were separated, but not until Captain Pentreath had told the major that he should answer to him for his language; to which Major Hollis had answered that he was perfectly ready to do so at any time, and could easily be found at his rooms, the address of which he mentioned.

A few minutes after this Captain Pentreath was persuaded to leave the club in company with one gentleman who appeared to stand by him; but he did so still in a violent rage, and even the hall-porter testified to the excited language used by the young officer as he passed through the vestibule, and his threats that he would be even with Hollis yet, and either make him apologise or shoot him like a dog.

This was all that was known of his doings at the time; while with regard to Major Hollis it was easily ascertained that he went home to his lodgings in Albion

Street less than half an hour after his antagonist's departure; that the little servant-maid there heard him let himself in, and came to the top of the kitchen-stairs (her mistress being out at the theatre) to make sure that it was he; that she saw him standing on the doorstep, apparently in angry colloquy with another man; and that being satisfied of his identity, she went downstairs again and to bed; that when there she was startled by a loud noise "like a bang," but being half-asleep paid no attention to it; and that it was left to her mistress on returning home, a couple of hours later, to find Major Hollis stretched across the hearthrug in the front parlour with a bullet through his brain, and stone dead.

This woman, for a wonder, showed presence of mind. Most of her class would, on receiving such a shock, have either executed a faint, which in the lower orders is apt to be a strangely noisy seizure; or have gone into hysterics, a still noisier proceeding requiring much brandy and all the attention from outsiders that ought to be paid to the injured party. Mrs. Jagers, however, was a sensible person, and neither did one nor the other; but within five minutes of ascertaining the state of affairs had roused the dazed and sleepy servant-girl and sent her off, first for a doctor—by good fortune there was one living only two or three doors off—and next for the gentleman whom poor Major Hollis had given her as his reference only three days before.

By good fortune, this individual—also a military man—had but just walked home with a friend from the club, where they had been spending the evening over the whist-table; and, horror-stricken as both were at the girl's news, they lost not a moment in jumping into the cab which had brought her, and going off to Albion Street as fast as the driver would take them.

And now comes the most terrible part of the story to the Pentreaths—the damning part as regarded Ernest.

The cause which took Major Hollis's landlady into his room at all was this—she saw the parlour-window lighted up, and being in want of change for half-a-crown to pay her cabman with, knocked at the door to ask her lodger if he could oblige her with it. At first sight, she thought the room was empty, and when a second glance showed her the body lying in a heap between the table and

the fireplace, she only waited to ascertain that life was really extinct, and was rushing out to call in the cabman to assist her, when, as she afterwards deposed, she became aware of the presence of a stranger, previously unseen, in the passage, as also that his back was towards her, and that he was making for the door; that she prevented this by seizing hold of him and shrieking for help, till not only the cab-driver, but a couple of passers-by came to her assistance; that they all saw that the man, who was a gentleman, and made no resistance, was deadly white and shaking like a leaf; and that she then and there exclaimed:

"It's about my lodger—he's lying murdered in his room, and here's the man as done it. For the Lord's sake don't let him escape!"

That on this, one of the bystanders ran for a policeman, and one being brought, the man was handed over to him, despite his protestations of innocence and assertions that he had only entered the house behind the landlady, having come there to call on Major Hollis, and that horrified by the sight that met his eyes, he had lost his presence of mind, and staggered back into the passage; that he called on the cabman to corroborate the first part of this story, but that the latter declared himself unable to do so, having been too busy looking in his vehicle to see if "the lady" had left anything behind her, to notice who else went in or out of the door; and finally that Colonel Patterson, the deceased man's "reference," had no sooner entered the house and seen the prisoner, over whom the constable was then holding guard, than he started back, exclaiming:

"Pentreath! Then it was you! Good God! have you killed him?"

After which, and a few further words between the prisoner and the same gentleman, the former was taken off in custody to the nearest police-station and detained till the morning, when he was brought before the magistrate and committed to prison pending the coroner's inquest, bail being refused.

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